Berlin Aug. 23d 1872

My dear Mr. Hunt,

I have kept your letter a few days before answering it and in the mean time have read it over repeatedly that I might have the great pleasure of seeing how kindly you judged my part-labor, if for no better reason. But I did also want to thoroughly consider your suggestion, which is so thoughtfully made and pressed upon it so weighty and persuasive language that I cannot do otherwise than look at it favorably.

I am sorry that your letter comes at a rather unfortunate moment. My whole household is in trouble and confusion. My wife and myself were called back from Newport to Berlin by the illness and unexpected death of one of our next

valued and important person in the house; my daughter-in-law is down with rheumatic fever - another woman gives warning that she is going in the very midst of our necessities and there is nobody (in a certain sense) in town, so that we are a desolate little community just at this moment and I feel more like a maid of all work than an author.

All that you say on the subject of the relation of what, if we talked plain English in this country, we should call the upper classes, to political life is perfectly true, at least in its generalities. It is the manly and generous way of looking at the duties connected with the enjoyment of exceptional privileges. I think if you had been longer among us as you would have learned to appreciate some of the difficulties inherent in our conditions of society, not perhaps more justly than you do, for you seem to me very fair and temperate in your judgments, but more intimately. You understand the machine, I think well, but just where the friction comes can only

be learned by long watching.

The immediate Randolphing of our political engines is done, and must be done, I am afraid largely by the coarse, strong, average or somewhat less than average men of the people. The idealists like Emerson and Wendell Phillips general force, but they are not fit for its every day application. Scholars like Winthrop and Hillard go to pieces like porcelain vases dashed against rocks in the rough waves of politics. Mr. Dana (author of Two Years before the Mast) a gentleman, a man of convictions, of eloquence, of learning accomplishments is unhorsed and trampled into the mud by a rough-and-tumble fighter like Butler. Sumner is a fortunate exception. Motley was flung overboard like a dead dog. Thinkers and scholars cannot act directly on the voting masses. The Nov states for their leaves it a great way off from the immediate point of resistance. The most sensible men with us (I suppose it is very much so elsewhere) do not pretend to try to make people go right. They only want and try to keep them as far from going wrong as possible. Take our present or rather coming election. Grant is in many ways objectionable. no doubt of that. He keeps bad company, which of itself

is almost conclusive. But the larger part of us think Greeley is on the whole less safe, and we have not trusted him as we have the others. So it is in every thing. Our geographical extent assumes a certain level of mediocrity in the Eminent persons. Every section must be represented whether it has a fitting person or not. Thus we live by compromise, and it is a profession by study to study and adjust these.

I have rambled into details with which I suppose you must feel acquainted - not as we are who live in a working republic, but still enough to undo my talk respecting, I fear.

But I understand you perfectly for all that. You do not want me to go to the ward-rooms and the dancers. You wish me to go up far higher than these, to the sources of action, to reach if I can the consciences of the select class to which I appeal - to make them feel their duty and their power.

It is a task which does me only too much honor. I am afraid I have less confidence in my power, at least in that direction than your generous estimate would allow me. I feel uncertain as to undertaking any considerable literary labor - the hammer is worn and shapeless a little. But I shall not file your letter - I shall keep it by me, for an encouragement and a stimulus, thanks & an answer I look at it. For the noble impulse and the kind regard which prompted it. Believe me, dear Mr Hunt

Always faithfully Yours W.H. Prescott.